United Nations E/RES/2018/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 December 2017

2018 session
Agenda item 18 (i)

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 10 November 2017

[*on the recommendation of the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (E/CONF.105/165)*]

2018/2. Future organization and methods of work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolution 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to set up a small group of consultants to consider technical problems, to draft recommendations for the domestic standardization of geographical names and to report to the Council,

Taking note of the first report of that group, in which the group stated that it was imperative to hold an international conference on the standardization of geographical names, and of the subsequent decisions of the Council on convening the conferences,

Recalling its resolution 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968, in which it approved the terms of reference for the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which was later renamed the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names by the decision taken by the Council at its 1854th meeting, on 4 May 1973,

Reaffirming the aims of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, derived from resolution 1314 (XLIV), in particular the aim to emphasize the importance of the standardization of geographical names at the national and international levels and to demonstrate the benefits to be derived from such standardization,

Recalling that, in its decision 1988/116 of 25 May 1988, the Council approved the statute and rules of procedure of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and that, in its decisions 1993/226 of 12 July 1993 and 2002/307 of 25 October 2002, it approved new versions of the statute,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

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and stressing the importance of the implementation of this new ambitious Agenda, including the relevance of the standardization of geographical names,

Recalling decision 29/101 of 29 April 2016 of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names,[1] in which the Group of Experts welcomed the initiative of the Bureau of the Group of Experts to reflect on how the working modalities of the Group of Experts could be improved, took note of the specific proposals that had been made by the Bureau and agreed that it was useful to periodically review the working methods of the Group of Experts in order to respond effectively to evolving policy needs and the changing information and communications technology environment,

Recalling also its resolution 2016/27 of 27 July 2016 on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management, in which it stressed the need to strengthen the coordination and coherence of global geospatial information management, in capacity-building, norm-setting, data collection, data dissemination and data sharing, among others, through appropriate coordination mechanisms, including in the broader United Nations system, building on the work of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management,

Emphasizing the breadth of experience in and the contribution of the Group of Experts towards the standardization and administration of geographical names at the national, regional and global levels, its impact across all global development themes, and the need to continue its work programme,

Recognizing that a robust, voluntary, participatory and integrated mechanism and structure consisting of working groups and linguistic and geographical divisions within a modern framework with revised methods of work will result in operational efficiencies and cost savings to Member States and across the United Nations system,

1. *Decides* that the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names shall be discontinued in their current formats and be subsumed by a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council that will retain their respective mandates, where relevant, as well as resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and responsibility for the implementation thereof, will be named the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which will be composed of representatives of States Members of the United Nations, including experts appointed by Governments, and will focus on technical issues associated with the standardization of geographical names that may, where appropriate, support relevant aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;[2]

2. *Also decides* that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names shall convene biennial sessions, in principle, over a period of five days, beginning in 2019, with the full authority to set its strategic direction and adopt resolutions to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and to be able to address the needs of a rapidly changing and expanding technical environment in a timely manner;

3. *Further decides* that the Group of Experts shall convene its sessions in New York, with the option to convene sessions at an alternative United Nations venue or in a specific country, should a Member State commit to hosting and funding the session;

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[1] See E/2016/66, sect. I.B.

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

4. *Reaffirms* the need to consider ways to avoid duplication and overlapping of efforts, if any, as well as to strengthen the joint work between the Group of Experts and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, taking into account that places and geospatial objects referred to by geographical names should have a geospatial location established through the global geodetic reference frame;

5. *Decides* that the elected Bureau of the Group of Experts shall be maintained to oversee the 2017–2019 transition, on an exceptional basis;

6. *Also decides* that the rules of procedure shall be drafted by the Bureau, in close consultation with the States Members of the United Nations, and be presented to the Economic and Social Council for adoption, in line with the procedures of relevant Council bodies, in advance of the first session of the Group of Experts, and that these rules will be the subject of an open negotiation process and will cover, among other matters, the following points:

(a) Identification of the structure of the Bureau, election methods and terms of service;

(b) Operational structure of the Group of Experts, including the role and scope of any plenary sessions, technical committees, working groups or divisional structures aimed at providing support for countries with regard to developing and refining programmes for the standardization of geographical names;

(c) Development of a draft agenda for the first session, reflecting, wherever possible, the agendas of the most recent session of the Group of Experts and the most recent United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(d) Ongoing review processes with regard to the structure and methods of work of the Group of Experts;

(e) Participation.

6th plenary meeting
10 November 2017